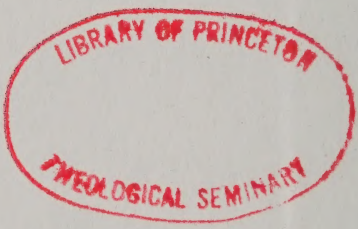

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The nature and ministry of
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THE

NATURE AND MINISTRY

OF

HOLY ANGELS.

BY REV. JAMES RAWSON, A. M.

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.—HEB. i, 14.

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PREFACE.

THE following pages are designed to present in a connected form the interesting facts which have been revealed in reference to the nature and ministry of holy angels. It is hoped that their perusal may be attended with pleasure and profit to the younger members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for whom this work is more especially designed.

JAMES RAWSON.

Schenectady, Feb. 1, 1847.

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NATURE AND ORDERS OF HOLY ANGELS.

CHAPTER I.

NATURE AND ORDERS OF HOLY ANGELS.

The imagination of man has given existence to a thousand forms that have had no reality whatever, except in the fancy of the poet, the bold delineations of the painter, or the dark superstitions of an unenlightened spirit. There was a time when the human mind was peculiarly under the control of imagination; when learning was principally confined to the cloisters of the monk, and superstitious fear reigned dominant in the nominally Christian world. Hence it was no uncommon thing for the intellect to be powerfully impressed with a belief in the existence of unearthly apparitions and spiritual visitants.

The dark forest, the lonely tower, the moldering abbey, and the secluded resting-place of the dead, were deemed the chosen and favorite scenes of the appearance of these fearful spirits, where, from time to time, they terrified the benighted traveler, or muttered mysterious messages in his ear. But those days have passed away, and with them the superstitious fears to which they gave birth. A purer philosophy and the increase of knowledge have scattered these apprehensions, and we are permitted to look back on them as the dreams and impressions of dark and past ages.

In the midst of the dissolution of ancient superstitions, and the disappearance of previously existing habits of thought, the sacred oracles remain the same. Among their interesting revelations, they exhibit to us an order of beings distinct from man, and who have yet a very intimate and a very important connection with the creatures who are passing through a transient existence here, and who are destined to outlive all that is earthly. An eminent theologian, whose works

remain as the blessing and the light of the church, to whose views we are disposed to render great deference, and to whose teachings frequent allusion will be made in the following pages, the Rev. Richard Watson, thus defines the term, angel: "A spiritual, intelligent substance, the first in rank and dignity among created beings. The word, angel, *ἀλγέλος*, is not properly a denomination of nature, but of office; denoting as much as *nuncius*, messenger, a person employed to carry one's orders, or declare his will. Thus it is St. Paul represents angels, (Heb. i, 14,) where he calls them 'ministering spirits;' and yet custom has prevailed so much, that angel is now commonly taken for the denomination of a particular order of spiritual beings, of great understanding and power, superior to the souls or spirits of men. Some of these are spoken of in Scripture in such a manner as plainly to signify that they are real beings, of a spiritual nature, of high power, perfection, dignity, and happiness."

Angel is clearly an official title, and is not

to be considered as descriptive of nature and essence; for it was borne, in the first ages, not only by those beings to whom it is now exclusively appropriated, but by one whose attributes were too glorious and awful to belong to any created nature,—the second person in the Trinity, the Son of God, the Angel of the covenant. A dignified messenger, or legate, seems to be the primitive idea contained in the Hebrew term, which the Old Testament writers used, and with which the sense of *αγγελος*, in the Septuagint and the New Testament, coincides. The personality of angels is established from the actions attributed to them; their nature expressed in those passages in which they are called "spirits:" and their attributes are either expressed in unequivocal declarations, or shadowed forth in sacred emblems instituted of God himself. "The existence of angels," says Mr. Watson, "is supposed in all religions, though it is incapable of being proved *a priori*. Indeed, the ancient Sadducees are represented as denying all spirits, God only excepted; and yet the Samaritans

and Caraites, who are reputed Sadducees, openly allowed them; witness Abusaid, the author of an Arabic version of the Pentateuch; and Aaron, a Caraite Jew, in his comment on the Pentateuch; both extant in manuscript in the king of France's library." The Mohammedan Koran makes frequent mention of angels, teaching, however, that they are all subject to mortality. To the angel Gabriel it attributes the most wonderful powers, as, that he is able to descend from heaven to earth in the space of an hour; to overturn a mountain with a single feather of his wing; to have brought fire from hell with which he instructed Eve to bake her bread, &c. The angel Ridwhan is represented as the keeper of the gate of paradise; the angel Azrael is appointed to receive the souls of such as die; and the angel Esraphil is represented as standing with a trumpet ready in his mouth to proclaim the day of judgment.

The heathen philosophers and poets were also agreed in recognizing the existence of intelligent beings, superior to man; as is

shown by St. Cyprian in his treatise on the vanity of idols; from the testimonies of Plato, Socrates, Trismegistus, &c. They were acknowledged under different appellations, the Greeks calling them *δαιμονια*, or demons, and the Romans, genii, or lares. Epicurus seems to have been the only one among the ancient philosophers who absolutely rejected them. Since the introduction of Christianity, a belief in the existence of angelic spirits has been universal throughout the civilized world, and, like almost every other truth of divine revelation, has been abused and perverted by the depravity of the human heart. It is believed by many, that there was a sect in the apostolic age who worshiped angelic spirits; and it is supposed that to this heresy St. Paul alludes when he cautions the Colossian church to "let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshiping of angels." And that this was really the case would seem to be proved by the following quotation from St. Justin, advanced by Mr. Newman in his "Essay on the Development of Christian

Doctrine:" "But him, (God,) and the Son who came from him, and taught us these things, and the *host of the other good angels* which attend upon and resemble them, and the prophetic Spirit, *we worship and adore.*" "This idolatry," says Mr. Watson, "may now be too justly charged upon the Romish and some other corrupt churches."

In different ages of the church there has been a great diversity of opinions as to the nature of angelic beings. Clemens Alexandrinus believed they had bodies; and this appears to have been the opinion of Origen, Cæsarius, Tertullian, and several others. On the other hand, Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Gregory Nicene, St. Cyril, St. Chrysostom, and, indeed, almost all the great lights of the early ages of the church, believed them to be pure spirits. "It has been the more current opinion," says Mr. Watson, "especially in later times, that they are substances entirely spiritual, who can, at any time, assume bodies, and appear in human or other shapes." In the Scriptures they are expressly stated to be "spirits;" and, without entering upon any

unfounded speculations on this subject, we may be permitted to suggest whether it is not possible that these angelic beings possess an organization similar to that of the resurrection bodies of the saints—a spiritual body capable of external manifestation. Dr. Young, dean of Sarum, in a sermon published by Mr. Wesley in his "Christian Library," has the following remarks on the nature of angelic beings: "As for the substance of their nature, the apostle tells us, that they are 'spirits;' that is, such beings as are free from the cloud and impediment of gross matter: and hence it is that they are strong, agile, quick, penetrating, as the wind, as the flame of fire, as the lightning; by which metaphors, therefore, they are sometimes expressed in holy writ. No resistance of material bodies can hinder their passage or motion; no darkness or covert can hinder their sight or intuition. Though they have no bodies, yet they can act upon all bodies; accordingly they can in an instant form and assume bodies unto themselves; which is demonstrated from their frequent appearances in holy writ, and from

their converse in human shape." Our knowledge of spiritual existence is confessedly imperfect and negative. The same is true in reference to matter. We know that it has a certain organization and certain properties; and we know of spirit that it has certain qualities and properties which belong to it. But as to what constitutes the essence of either matter or spirit, is a question involved in perplexities which the human mind cannot develop. "We do not at all know," said the immortal Newton, "what the essence of anything is." Hence, when we speak of angelic spiritual nature, while we believe the fact, we are totally unable to explain the peculiarity of its essence.

The apostle Paul hints at a subordination among angelic beings, one differing from another either in office or glory. Ecclesiastical writers make a hierarchy of nine orders of angels. The author who is commonly known as Dionysius the Areopagite admits but three hierarchies, and three orders of angels in each hierarchy. In the first, are seraphim, cherubim, and thrones; in the second, dominions,

mights, and powers; in the third, principalities, archangels, and angels. The Jews reckon four orders or companies of angels, each headed by an archangel; the first order being that of Michael; the second, of Gabriel; the third, of Uriel; and the fourth, of Raphael. On this point, Mr. Watson says: "Following the Scripture account, we shall find mention made of different orders of these superior beings; for such a distinction of orders seems intimated in the names given to different classes. Thus we have thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, authorities, living ones, cherubim, and seraphim. That some of these titles may indicate the same class of angels is probable; but that they all should be different appellations of one common and equal order is improbable."

Previous to the Babylonish captivity, the Hebrews seem to have been unacquainted with the names of any of the angels. The Apocryphal writer Tobit, who is supposed to have resided in Nineveh some time before the captivity, mentions the angel Raphael; and Daniel, who lived at Babylon some time af-

ter Tobit, has taught us the names of Michael and Gabriel. In the New Testament we find only the two latter mentioned by name.

Our knowledge in reference to the various orders of angelic intelligences is bounded by the simple fact of their existence, with the exceptions of the cherubim, seraphim, and archangels, concerning each of which orders the Scriptures furnish limited and yet interesting information.

The term "cherub," and its plural "cherubim," are of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The following quotation from Mr. Watson comprises, perhaps, as much as is revealed on this subject: "Whether the term 'cherub' is the name of a distinct class of celestials, or designates the same order as the seraphim, we have no means of determining. But the term *cherubim* generally signifies those figures which Moses was commanded to make and place at each end of the mercy-seat, or propitiatory, and which covered the ark, with expanded wings, in the most holy place of the Jewish tabernacle and temple. The original meaning of

the term, and the shape or form of these, any further than that they were *alata animata*, 'winged creatures,' is not certainly known. The word in Hebrew is sometimes taken for a calf or ox, and Ezekiel sets down the face of a cherub as synonymous to the face of an ox. The word *cherub*, in Syriac and Chaldee, signifies to till or plough, which is the proper work of oxen. *Cherub* also signifies strong and powerful. Grotius says they were figures much like that of a calf; and Bochart, likewise, thinks that they were more like the figure of an ox than anything besides; and Spencer is of the same mind. But Josephus says they were extraordinary creatures of a figure unknown to mankind. The opinion of most critics, taken, it seems, from Ezekiel's description, is, that they were figures composed of parts of various creatures; as a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. But certainly we have no decided proof that the figures placed in the holy of holies, in the tabernacle, were of the same form with those described by Ezekiel. The contrary, indeed, seems rather indicated, because they looked

down upon the mercy-seat, which is an attitude not well adapted to a four-faced creature, like the emblematical cherubim seen by Ezekiel.

"The cherubim of the sanctuary were two in number, one at each end of the mercy-seat; which, with the ark, was placed exactly in the middle, between the north and south sides of the tabernacle. It was here that atonement was made, and that God was rendered propitious by the high priest sprinkling the blood upon and before the mercy-seat. Here the glory of God appeared, and here he met his high priest, and by him his people, and from hence he gave forth his oracles; whence the whole holy place was called *the oracle*. These cherubim, it must be observed, had feet whereon they stood, and their feet were joined, in one continued beaten work, to the ends of the mercy-seat which covered the ark; so that they were wholly over or above it. Those in the tabernacle were of beaten gold, being but of smaller dimensions; but those in the temple of Solomon were made of the wood of the olive-

tree overlaid with gold; for they were very large, extending their wings to the whole breadth of the oracle, which was twenty cubits. They are called 'cherubim of glory,' not merely or chiefly on account of the matter or formation of them, but because they had the glory of God, or the glorious symbol of his presence, 'the Shechinah,' resting between them. As this glory abode in the inward tabernacle, and as the figures of the cherubim represented the angels who surround the manifestation of the divine presence in the world above, that tabernacle was rendered a fit image of the court of heaven, in which light it is considered everywhere in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In Ezekiel, the cherubic figures are evidently connected with the dispensations of Providence; and they have therefore appropriate forms, emblematical of the strength, wisdom, swiftness, and constancy, with which the holy angels minister in carrying on God's designs; but in the sanctuary they are connected with the administration of grace; and they are rather

adoring beholders, than actors, and probably appeared under forms more simple."

There is considerable difficulty felt in obtaining a consistent view of the meaning of the four living creatures, improperly rendered "beasts," in our translation, seen in the vision of St. John. Rev. iv, 7. There are many points of resemblance between them and the living creatures or cherubim of Ezekiel; for in both instances they are winged, have various faces, and are full of eyes, and above them is a throne, and a bow, the token of a covenant. The apostle also heard the living creatures which were before him join in the reiterated acclaim of "Holy," similar to the seraphim which appeared to Isaiah. All these things seem to bespeak them angels: but there are other considerations which seem fatal to such a supposition; for, in the same chapter, angels are mentioned as distinct from them, and in the ninth verse they are represented as acknowledging, together with the elders, that they were redeemed unto God by the blood of the Lamb, which the heaven-

ly hierarchy cannot be, not having lost their first estate, and consequently not being subjects of redemption. By some excellent and sober interpreters of the word of God they have been viewed as emblematical of Christian believers, in their ultimate and triumphant state. The living creatures beheld by the prophet, portrayed the angelic church, and the living ones of the Apocalypse, by parallel, the Christian church. On this point Mr. Watson remarks: "As to the living creatures mentioned in Rev. iv, 7, some think them a hieroglyphical representation, not of the qualities of angels, but of those of real Christians; especially of those in the suffering and active periods of the church. The first a lion, signifying their undaunted courage, manifested in meeting with confidence the greatest sufferings; the second a calf or ox, emblematical of unwearied patience; the third with the face of a man, representing prudence and compassion; the fourth a flying eagle, signifying activity and vigor. The four qualities thus emblematically set forth in these four living creatures, namely, undaunt-

ed courage, unwearied patience under sufferings, prudence united with kindness, and vigorous activity, are found, more or less, in the true members of Christ's church in every age and nation. But others have imagined that this representation might be intended to intimate also that these qualities would especially prevail in succeeding ages of the church, in the order in which they are here placed: that is, that in the first age true Christians would be eminent for the courage, fortitude, and success, wherewith they should spread the gospel; that in the next age they would manifest remarkable patience in bearing persecution, when they should be 'killed all the day,' like calves or oxen appointed for the slaughter; that in the subsequent age or ages, when the storms of persecution were blown over, and Christianity was generally spread through the whole Roman empire knowledge and wisdom, piety and virtue, should increase, and the church should wear the face of a man, and excel in prudence, humanity, love, and good works; and that in ages still later, being reformed from vari-

ous corruptions in doctrine and practice, and full of vigor and activity, it should carry the gospel, as upon the wings of a flying eagle, to the remotest nations under heaven, 'to every kindred, and tongue, and people.'"

Our Lord, we shall recollect, stated that redeemed and glorified men should be ισαγγελοι, "equal to the angels;" and if these glorious appearances seem to indicate, from their symbols, similar attributes to the cherubim of former times, such as intelligence, strength, swiftness, and effulgence, then may it not be that we are permitted to gaze upon the symbolical representatives of the assembly of saved and glorified spirits in their equi-angelic state? The whole thus appears to be consistent,—the "living ones," together with the elders, fall down before the Lamb, and cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for thou art worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people:" and then the angels around the throne join

their own voices, and all heaven is blended in one triumphant anthem of praise.

This is a sacred and mysterious subject; and far be it from us to intrude into it with irreverent fancies, especially when so much diligent erudition has been employed upon it, and with an ability which we can never hope to imitate. As far as sober interpretation and what St. Paul terms the "analogy of faith," will conduct us, we may go, but no further. Beyond lie the unrevealed secrets of Jehovah. The apostle Paul, in giving an explanation of the "holy of holies," and of what was therein, did but just glance at the cherubim of glory, shadowing the mercy-seat; he passed on in his brief and rapid comment, and said, that at that time he could not speak more particularly. However we regret this, and many have often regretted it, the words are now "closed up and sealed until the time of the end;" for when the inspired text breaks off, no human mind can continue the subject.

The only Scriptural statement in reference

to the order of angelic intelligences called seraphim, is found in the magnificent description of Isaiah's vision, contained in the sixth chapter of his prophecy: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke."

The word "seraph" means "a burning one;" or "those who are like unto fire:" their name denoting the purity of their nature, the ardor of their zeal, and the intensity of that affection which they bear to God.

The term "archangel" occurs but twice in the Holy Scriptures, and never in the plural. The passages in which it occurs are 1 Thess. iv, 16: "For the Lord himself shall

descend from heaven with a shout; with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God;" and Jude 9: "Yet Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."

There is some question among theological writers whether the "archangel" spoken of in the above passages be not the Son of God, the Angel of the covenant, and so represented in this peculiar connection. On this point Bishop Horsley has the following observations: "It has been for a long time the fashion in the church to speak very frequently and familiarly of archangels as beings of an order with which we are perfectly acquainted. Some say there are seven of them. Upon what solid ground that assertion stands, I know not; but this I know, the word 'archangel' is not to be found in any one passage of the Old Testament: in the New Testament it occurs twice, and only twice. One of the two passages is in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians; where the apostle,

among the circumstances of the pomp of our Lord's descent from heaven to the final judgment, mentions 'the voice of the archangel;' the other passage is in the Epistle of St. Jude, where the title of archangel is coupled with the name of 'Michael, the archangel.' This passage is so remarkably obscure that I shall not attempt to draw any conclusion from it but this, which manifestly follows, be the particular sense of the passage what it may: since this is one of the two texts in which alone the word 'archangel' is found in the whole Bible; since in this one text only the title of archangel is coupled with any name; and since the name with which it is here coupled is Michael; it follows undeniably that the archangel Michael is the only archangel of whom we know anything from holy writ. It cannot be proved from holy writ, and, if not from holy writ, it cannot be proved at all, that any archangel exists but the one archangel Michael, and this one archangel Michael is unquestionably the Michael of the Book of Daniel.

"I must observe by the way, with respect

to the import of the title of archangel, that the word, by etymology, clearly implies a superiority of rank and authority in the person to whom it is applied. It implies a command over angels; and this is all that the word of necessity implies. But it follows not, by any sound rule of argument, that, because no other superiority than that of rank and authority is implied in the title, no other belongs to the person distinguished by the title, and that he is in all other respects a mere angel. Since we admit various orders of intelligent beings, it is evident that a being highly above the angelic order may command angels.

"To ascertain, if we can, to what order of beings the archangel Michael may belong, let us see how he is described by the prophet Daniel, who never mentions him by that title; and what action is attributed to him in the Book of Daniel and in another book, in which he bears a principal part.

"Now Daniel calls him 'one of the chief princes,' or 'one of the capital princes,' or 'one of the princes that are at the head of all;' for this I maintain to be the full, and

not more than the full, import of the Hebrew words. Now we are clearly got above the earth, into the order of celestials, who are the princes that are *first*, or *at the head of all?* Are they any other than the three persons in the Godhead? Michael, therefore, is one of them; but which of them? This is not left in doubt. Gabriel, speaking of him to Daniel, calls him 'Michael *your* prince,' and 'the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people;' that is, not for the nation of the Jews in particular, but for the children, the spiritual children, of that holy seed, the elect people of God; a description which applies particularly to the Son of God, and to no one else; and in perfect consistence with this description of Michael in the Book of Daniel, is the action assigned to him in the Apocalypse, in which we find him fighting with the old serpent, the deceiver of the world, and victorious in the combat. That combat who was to maintain? in that combat who was to be victorious, but the seed of the woman? From all this it is evident, that Michael is a name for our Lord himself, in his par-

ticular character of the champion of his faith ful people, against the violence of the apostate faction and the wiles of the devil." On these remarks of Bishop Horsley, Mr. Watson observes: "To this opinion there is nothing irreconcilable in the 'voice of the archangel,' mentioned in 1 Thess. iv, 16; since the 'shout,' the 'voice,' the 'trump of God,' may be all the majestic summons of the Judge himself. At the same time we must feel that the reasoning of Bishop Horsley, though ingenious, is far from being conclusive against the existence of one or more archangels."

As we have already remarked, the specific names of individual angels were unknown to the Hebrews before the Babylonish captivity. In the Koran of Mohammed, and in the Arabic "Biblical Legends," compiled by Dr. Weil, the names of Gabriel, Michael, Israfil, and Israil, very frequently occur. The only angelic proper names that we meet with in the Scriptures, are those already referred to, Michael and Gabriel. On the latter of these names, in connection with the annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist, Mr. Watson

makes the following remarks: "Gabriel, signifies *the power of God.* It has often been said that the Jews learned the names of angels in Chaldea. They probably received many of their corrupt and superstitious notions respecting angels from the oriental philosophy, and the names of imaginary orders and classes of angelic beings, as well as the names of individuals. But this name was not so learned. It was a name of revelation; the angel's own name told by himself; and the reason why he gave his name was, to show that he was the same angel who had appeared to Daniel, and thus to call the attention of Zacharias, and of other pious people through him, those who were 'waiting for the redemption,' to those prophecies respecting Messiah which this same angel had communicated to Daniel, and which were about to be accomplished. When he speaks of himself, as *standing in the presence of God*, he declares his dignity, for the purpose of producing a stronger impression of the importance of his message. His name, *the power of God*, indicated the exalted qualities

with which his divine Creator had endowed him; his standing in the immediate *presence*, his nearer and more intimate access to the manifested glories of the Majesty of heaven, showed him to be among the most exalted of the order of angels. To this dignified messenger were committed the prophecies of Christ revealed to Daniel; he announced the conception and birth of Messiah's herald, and of the Christ himself. This indeed was employment for an angel of the highest order, and such as he would feel himself most honored by. Redemption is the most glorious theme of the highest intellects in the universe; of the mental power of the sons of light themselves."

There are various opinions as to the time of the creation of angels. Origen, Bede, and others, think that angels were created at the same time as the heavens, and that Moses included them under the expression, "In the beginning God created the heavens." Others suppose that they are intended under the term light, which God created on the first day. For these opinions, however, there

is no just foundation in the Mosaic account. It is supposed by some that angels existed long before the formation of our solar system; and the word of God seems to favor this opinion. In Job xxxviii, 4, 7, Jehovah is represented as saying, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" As man was not created until the sixth day, the term "sons of God" cannot be applied to the human race, and it seems to be in accordance with the views of the best interpreters of the Scriptures, to understand it as implying the holy angels. The precise period of their creation, however, has not been revealed, and hence properly belongs to those "secret things" which are known only to the Infinite Mind. This, with many other interesting facts which God has seen fit to conceal, may become the subjects of sanctified investigation in that future state of illumination, to which the beautiful words of our Lord to Peter so clearly refer: "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

With reference to the number of the angels, the sacred record is our only guide. The exact number is nowhere mentioned in Scripture, but it is always represented as very great. Daniel says of the Ancient of days: "A fiery stream came from before him; thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him." The Psalmist declares, that the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. At the advent of Jesus, we are told that one of the heavenly host appeared and delivered his message of mercy to the shepherds, and suddenly there appeared a multitude of the heavenly host, the concave sparkling, as it were, with a constellation of heavenly beauty, as

> "Angels flew with eager joy
> To bear the news to man."

Our Lord, when on earth, declared that more than twelve legions of angels awaited his invocation. A Roman military legion consisted of six thousand men; which makes the Saviour's words to mean that seventy-two thousand angelic spirits were ready to attend

his call. The apostle Paul gives an impressive view of the number of the heavenly host. He says, they are "an innumerable company." After the most comprehensive mind has exerted itself in the computation of numbers, there is a point at which it necessarily fails. But inspiration has expressly declared that the angelic hosts form "an innumerable company;" and these, with millions of redeemed and sanctified human spirits, shall conjointly form the glorious society of the upper world. One loves to dwell upon it; there is something sublime in the thought of a vast multitude of intelligent and purified beings, every intellect and every heart rising in adoration to Him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.

"Lift your eyes of faith, and see
Saints and angels join'd in one;
What a countless company
Stand before yon dazzling throne!
Prostrate on their face, before
God and his Messiah fall;
Then in hymns of praise adore,
Shout the Lamb that died for all."

CHAPTER II.

INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL QUALITIES OF HOLY ANGELS.

As to the physical qualities of angelic spirits, (using the term in the same sense in which it may be applied to the spiritual bodies of the saints after the resurrection,) they are represented in the word of God as invested with *peculiar beauty*. There seems to have been a glory about their personal appearance infinitely beyond anything which can attach to beings of this lower world. Mr. Taylor, in Robinson's edition of Calmet, observes: "The general tokenof angelic presence seems to have been a certain splendor, or brightness, acccompanying their persons; but this seems to have had also a distinction in degree. It would seem, that sometimes a person only, not a splendor, was seen; sometimes a splendor only, not a person; and sometimes both a splendor and a person."

In one of the visions vouchsafed to Daniel we have the following impressive description of angelic personal appearance:—"Then I

lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." Ezekiel beheld them in vision, covered with wings, full of eyes, and moving like lightning: "And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of a host; when they stood they let down their wings."

The angel who announced the resurrection of Jesus is thus described: "His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." Matt. xxviii, 3, 4. The angel of the apocalyptic vision, who announces "that there should be time no longer," is thus described by St. John: "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a

cloud; and a rainbow was upon his head; and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire."

In the apocryphal Book of Maccabees, it is related that Heliodorus resolved to invade the temple of Jehovah, and plunder its treasury. On proceeding to execute his impious purpose, "there appeared unto them a horse with a terrible rider upon him, and adorned with a very fair covering, and he ran fiercely, and smote at Heliodorus with his fore-feet, and it seemed that he that sat upon the horse had complete harness of gold. Moreover, two other young men appeared before him, notable in strength, excellent in beauty, and comely in apparel, who stood by him on either side."

"But who is he, in panoply of gold,
Throned on that burning charger? bright his form,
Yet in its brightness awful to behold,
And girt with all the terrors of the storm!
Lightning is on his helmet's crest,—and fear
Shrinks from the splendor of his brow severe.

"And by his side two radiant warriors stand,
All armed, and kingly in commanding grace—
O! more than kingly; godlike! sternly grand!
Their port indignant, and each dazzling face

Beams with the beauty to immortals given,
Magnificent in all the wrath of heaven."

They are also represented as remarkable for their *power;* hence they are called "mighty angels," and "angels that excel in strength." The terrible destruction of the Assyrian army may be cited as an example of the tremendous power with which angelic spirits are clothed in the execution of the divine purposes: "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." In illustration of the same fact, we may also refer to the visitation of pestilence by angelic instrumentality, recorded in 2 Samuel xxiv, 15, 16: "So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed; and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men. And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord

repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough; stay now thine hand." The angel who protected Daniel from the ferocity of the lions; the celestial deliverer of Peter from the prison; and the angels of the Apocalypse, who are represented as holding the winds of heaven, sounding the trumpet, opening the seals, and pouring out the vials, may also be adduced as illustrations of the delegated might of the heavenly hosts.

The intellectual and moral qualities of angelic natures are the most beautiful features in their character. The language of the woman of Tekoah to David, recognizes the fact of angelic wisdom: 2 Sam. xiv, 20, "My Lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth." Think for a moment of angelic knowledge. Imagine a pure and powerful intellect, that ever since the creation of this world has been surveying the being of God, the wonderful developments of the divine government, the mysterious combinations of

providential supervision, and, above all, the work of redemption as unfolded in connection with the history of our race, and what a vast amount of knowledge must accrue from such an experience, extending over thousands of years! In connection with the glorious work of redemption it is expressly asserted, that there is made known to them "the manifold wisdom of God;" as though the apostle designed to intimate that to angelic minds the redeeming system presented the most glorious and overwhelming development of the divine wisdom. They had seen its wonderful exhibition in creation: and, as this world arose from the darkness of chaos, and sparkled in the newly created light; as the waters were gathered together, and the dry land appeared; as plant, and herb, and tree, covered the one, and myriads of organized forms crowded the other; as they gazed upon its greater light by day, and the beautiful lamp by which it was illumined by night—their anthem of praise and joy mingled with the music of the morning stars, and made the heavenly circles vocal with their tide of melody.

"God glanced on chaos—into form it sprang—
Worlds cluster'd round him, instant at his will.
The angels gazed with wonder. Orb on orb
Swept past their vision, shedding fitful gleams
Upon their jewel'd brows and glittering wings,
And trailing, as they wheel'd along their flight,
Pathways of splendor, till the boundless space
Flash'd in a web of gorgeous brilliancy.
But when Omnipotence had form'd his robe,
And cast its spangled blazonry round heaven,
The countless myriads of those shining ones,
Their wonder changed to awe, bow'd crown and harp
Before the dazzling brightness. Then, as stole
The first low music of the singing stars,
Melting along the stillness, rank on rank,
The proud archangel in his majesty,
And the pure seraph in his loveliness,
Leaping erect, pour'd from the quiv'ring string
Their anthem to the Holiest, till heaven's air,
Stirr'd by the diapason of the hymn,
Roll'd on an ocean of deep billowy sounds."

Angelic spirits had seen much of the wisdom of God in the divine government, very much in his providential dealings; but when they bent from their high and holy abodes, and saw "God manifest in the flesh," an incarnate Redeemer, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, standing the great substitute for human transgression, it was especially then that their minds expanded to grasp

the mighty development of Infinite Wisdom and that the harps of heaven, with a tender ness and richness hitherto unknown, swelled the glorious harmony of that anthem whose delightful chorus fell upon the ear of the sanctified John, "God is love."

It is worthy of notice, how wonderfully this knowledge must be incessantly augmented by the constant displays of saving and pardoning grace. "I say unto you," is the assertion of that Jesus whom all the angels worship; "I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." For thousands of years they have marked and exulted over every instance of conversion. Every sinner who has burst away from the enthrallment of Satan, and fled for refuge to the hope set before him, has been a subject of special and tender interest to these holy spirits. As the first tear of sincere repentance fell, an angel's hand has caught the precious drop, and borne it triumphantly upward to glitter in the crown of that Saviour of whose tears and blood it was at once the trophy and the purchase.

It scarcely need to be said that angelic spirits are characterized by stainless purity. "Holy angels," is a characteristic expression of the Scriptures. Their pure minds were never contaminated; they never had an unholy thought, a polluted imagination, an unhallowed affection. How little we can comprehend of this state! O! to think of beings that have never had one sin over which to grieve, one transgression over which to mourn, one stain of pollution to defile their spotless holiness: who, from the first bright exercise of reason, have enjoyed a purity of intellect, whose powers have never been abused; a purity of affection which has ever loved that which is good; a purity of will resulting in unbroken obedience; and a purity of nature constantly approximating the unspeakable purity of Jehovah!

In the Holy Scriptures angels are described as beings of great benevolence. They are represented by our Lord as rejoicing over the repentance of sinners, and as bearing the disenthralled spirit of the suffering Lazarus to Abraham's bosom. In the language of Hooker,

"Beholding the face of God, in admiration of so great excellency, they all adore him, and being rapt with the love of his beauty, they cleave for ever inseparably unto him. Desire to resemble him in goodness maketh them unweariable and even insatiable in their longing to do, by all means, all manner of good unto all the creatures of God, but especially unto the children of men. In the countenance of whose nature, looking downward, they behold themselves, beneath themselves; even as upward in God, beneath whom themselves are, they see that character which is nowhere but in themselves, and as resembled." In the alliance of "the whole family in heaven and earth," these celestial spirits manifest the extent and the character of their benevolence. None can tell how often they are employed in alleviating our sorrows, in suggesting holy thoughts to our minds, in defeating the plans of our invisible and vindictive foes, and in guarding the militant heirs of glory.

"Angels our servants are,
And keep in all our ways;
And in their hands they bear
The sacred sons of grace;

Our guardians to that heavenly bliss,
They all our steps attend;
And God himself our Father is,
And Jesus is our Friend."

Nothing, perhaps, can more fitly express the true character of angelic benevolence, in its depth and tenderness, than the following remarks by Dr. Chalmers: "How wide is the compass of benevolence in heaven, and how exquisite is the feeling of its tenderness, and how pure and how fervent are its aspirings among those unfallen beings who have no darkness and no incumbring weight of corruption to strive against! Angels have a mightier reach of contemplation. Angels can look upon this world, and all which it inherits, as the part of a larger family. Angels were in the full exercise of their powers even at the first infancy of our species, and shared in the gratulations of that period, when at the birth of humanity all intelligent nature felt a gladdening impulse, and the morning stars sang together for joy. They loved us even with that love which a family on earth bears to a younger sister, and the very childhood of our tinier faculties did only serve the more

to endear us to them; and though born at a later hour in the history of creation, did they regard us as heirs of the same destiny with themselves, to rise along with them in the scale of moral elevation, to bow at the same footstool, and to partake in those high dispensations of a parent's kindness, and a parent's care, which are ever emanating from the throne of the Eternal on all the members of a duteous and affectionate family. Take the reach of an angel's mind, but, at the same time, take the seraphic fervor of an angel's benevolence along with it; how from the eminence on which he stands he may have an eye upon many worlds, and a remembrance of the origin and the successive concerns of every one of them; how he may feel the full force of a most affecting relationship with the inhabitants of each, as the offspring of one common Father; and though it be both the effect and the evidence of our depravity, that we cannot sympathize with these pure and generous ardors of a celestial spirit, how it may consist with the lofty comprehension, and the ever breathing love of an

angel, that he can both shoot his benevolence abroad over a mighty expanse of suns and systems, and lavish a flood of tenderness on each individual of their teeming population."

"Was 't for the helm'd and crown'd
That suns were stay'd at noonday? Stormy seas
As a rill parted? Mail'd archangels sent
To wither up the strength of kings with death?
I tell you if these marvels have been done,
'Twas for the wearied and the oppress'd of men;
They needed such."

Angelic spirits being thus characterized by wisdom, holiness, and love, it necessarily follows that supreme devotion to the will of God is the great principle of their existence. To do the will of God is not only the grand object of angelic employment, but the great source of angelic happiness: "For as the wind that fans the flowers returns from them with the tincture of their sweetness; so all the breath that the heavenly host spends in the praise of God returns to themselves accumulated with joy and blessing: God having appointed (as his holiness requires) that there shall be an inseparable connection between duty and beatitude; between a zeal for his

glory and the participation of his glory." Our Lord alludes to the fact of angelic devotion to the will of God in that beautiful petition in the Lord's prayer: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." "We do not here pray," says Mr. Watson, "that God may do his will, nor merely express our acquiescence in what he wills; but that what God wills ourselves and all men to do, may be done by us *on earth as it is done in heaven by the angels;* that is, vigorously and with delight, perfectly and with constancy. The model of our obedience is thus the elevated one of the unfallen and unsinning angels, all whose *principles* of obedience ought to exist in us, and be continually carrying up our services to a nearer practical resemblance to theirs. There is here probably an allusion to Psalm ciii, 20, 21: 'Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, *that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.* Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.'"

In the apocalyptic vision there occurs an instance of the express form of angelic worship

and service, interesting not only as an illustration of the fact of their devotion to the service of God, but also as imbodying the language in which this exalted worship is rendered in the church above: "And all the angels stood round about the throne, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worship ed God, saying, Amen: blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." Rev. vii, 11, 12.

Who would not wish to join their song, and to mingle in their pure and holy worship? With such an illustrious example before us of consecration to the service of God, who would not urge with all the agony of prayer, and with all the commanding power of faith, the petition taught by Jesus: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." The same fact is impressively exhibited in the vision of Isaiah. Human language cannot present a scene of greater sublimity and solemnity than is there described. Before the fearful manifestation of Jehovah's presence the seraphim veil their faces and their feet, and cry

one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." The attitude of the adoring seraphim, the solemn language of their devout ascription, the smoke that filled the house, and the trembling of the posts of the door, compose a scene of unparalleled magnificence and sublimity. Well might Milton exclaim,—

> "God's state
> Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
> They also serve who only stand and wait."

It has been observed, in the introductory part of this work, that the term angel was borne, in the first ages, not only by those beings to whom it is now exclusively appropriated, but by One whose attributes were too glorious and awful to belong to any created nature, the second person in the Trinity, the Son of God, the Angel of the covenant. Mr. Watson, in his "Theological Institutes," has given a luminous and extended statement of this important truth, and as it is impossible to read the Scriptures of the Old Testament intelligently and profitably without bearing it in mind, while at the same

time it furnishes one of the most powerful and conclusive evidences of the foundation stone of Christianity, the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, we request attention to the fol lowing condensed exhibition of the argument from the pen of Mr. Watson himself:—

"When the angel of the Lord found Hagar in the wilderness, 'she called the name of Jehovah that spake to her, Thou God seest me.' Jehovah appeared unto Abraham in the Plains of Mamre. Abraham lifted up his eyes, and three *men*, three persons in human form, 'stood by him.' One of the three is called Jehovah. And Jehovah said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?' Appearances of the same personage occur to Isaac and to Jacob under the name of 'the God of Abraham and of Isaac.' After one of these manifestations, Jacob says, 'I have seen God face to face;' and at another, 'Surely the Lord (Jehovah) is in this place.' The same Jehovah was made visible to Moses, and gave him his commission; and God said, 'I AM THAT I AM; thou shalt say to the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me

unto you.' The same Jehovah went before the Israelites by day in a pillar of cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire; and by him the law was given amidst terrible displays of power and majesty from Mount Sinai: 'I am the Lord (Jehovah) thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: thou shalt have no other gods before me,' &c.

"The collation of a few passages, or of the different parts of the same passages, of Scripture, will show that Jehovah and 'the Angel of the Lord,' when used in this eminent sense, are the same person. Jacob says of Bethel, where he had exclaimed, 'Surely Jehovah is in this place:' 'The *Angel* of God appeared to me in a dream, saying, I am the God of Bethel.' Upon his death-bed he gives the names of *God* and *Angel* to this same person: 'The God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the *Angel* which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.' So, in Hosea xii, 2, 5, it is said, 'By his strength he had power with *God*; yea, he had power over the *Angel*, and prevailed.' 'We found him

in Bethel, and there he spake with us, even the *Lord God of hosts*; the Lord is his memorial.' Here the same person has the names, *God*, *Angel*, and *Lord God of hosts*. 'The *Angel of the Lord* called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, By *myself* have I sworn, saith the Lord, (Jehovah,) that since thou hast done this thing, in blessing will I bless thee.' The *Angel of the Lord* appeared to Moses in a flame of fire; but this same angel 'called to him out of the bush, and said, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.' To omit many other passages, St. Stephen, in alluding to this part of the history of Moses, in his speech before the council, says, 'There appeared to Moses, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, an *Angel of the Lord* in a flame of fire,' showing that this phraseology was in use among the Jews of his day, and that this Angel and Jehovah were regarded as the same being; for he adds, 'Moses was in the church in the wilderness with the *Angel* which

spoke unto him in Mount Sinai.' There is one part of the history of the Jews in the wilderness, which so fully shows that they distinguished this Angel of Jehovah from all created angels, as to deserve particular attention. In Exodus xxiii, 20, God makes this promise to Moses and the Israelites: 'Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice: provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him.' Of this Angel let it be observed, that he is here represented as the guide and protector of the Israelites; to him they were to owe their conquests and their settlement in the promised land, which are in other places often attributed to the *immediate* agency of God; that they are cautioned to 'beware of him,' to reverence and stand in dread of him; that the pardon of transgressions belongs to him; finally, 'that the *name* of God was in him.' This *name* must be understood of God's own peculiar name, Jehovah, I AM, which he assumed as

his distinctive appellation at his first appearing to Moses; and as the names of God are indicative of his nature, he who had a right to bear the peculiar name of God, must also have his essence.

"This view is put beyond all doubt by the fact, that Moses and the Jews so understood the matter; for afterward, when their sins had provoked God to threaten not to go up with them *himself*, but to commit them to 'an angel who should drive out the Canaanites,' &c., the people mourned over this as a great calamity, and Moses betook himself to special intercession, and rested not until he obtained the repeal of the threat, and the renewed promise, 'My *presence* shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.' Nothing, therefore, can be more clear than that Moses and the Israelites considered the promise of the Angel, in whom was 'the name of God,' as a promise that God *himself* would go with them. With this uncreated Angel, this *presence* of the Lord, they were satisfied, but not with 'an angel,' indefinitely, who was by *nature* of that order of beings

usually so called, and therefore a created being; for at the news of God's determination not to go up with them, Moses hastens to the tabernacle to make his intercessions, and refuses an inferior conductor: 'If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.'

"The Jews held this Word, or Angel of the Lord, to be the future Messiah, as appears from the writings of their older rabbins. So that he appears as the Jehovah of all the three dispensations, and yet is invariably described as a separate person from the unseen Jehovah who sends him. He was then the Word to be made flesh, and to dwell for a time among us, to open the way to God by his sacrifice, and to rescue the race, whose nature he should assume, from sin and death. This he has now actually effected; and the patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian religions, are thus founded upon the same great principles,—the fall and misery of mankind, and their deliverance by a *divine Redeemer*."

CHAPTER III.

MINISTRY OF HOLY ANGELS.

THE doctrine of Providence is one of the most sublime and interesting revelations of the inspired oracles. It seems to bring redeemed man so closely in contact with his God, that, notwithstanding he is "a pilgrim, and a sojourner," he may look with a calm and confident spirit upon his present position, with all its mysterious circumstances, and, echoing back the language of the Psalmist, say, "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will he deliver me; with long life will he satisfy me; and show me his salvation." But, although God is the source of that omniscient power which develops salvation for his people, yet he often uses a mighty chain of instrumentality in accomplishing his designs both of judgment and mercy. Every creature in that chain is under his law, and acts as his servant, and however "the ungodly sometimes unseasonably exult, and the timid and uninformed believer in revelation trembles for the issue, he need

not. Let him only confidently wait till the inquiry has reached the last link in the chain, and that link will invariably be found in the hand of God." With this view of the subject, our admiration of divine Providence is not at all abated when we learn that celestial and angelic spirits are permitted to be in part the medium of communication between the Deity and ourselves; for, although they are creatures, they act under a divine commission, and are the subjects of an influence and movement as great as that which would be required to operate immediately on the ultimate objects of the divine regard, in whose behalf they are employed. It was to open an additional fountain of moral happiness that they were placed in this position, and thus objects and ends of benevolence were to be answered in reference to them, as well as in reference to those who were created a little lower than they.

So vast and complicated is the scheme of control and direction implied in providence, that a portion of the instrumentality could not more appropriately be committed than unto

those whose dwelling is on high; "inhabitants," in the language of Hooker, "of those sacred palaces where nothing but light and blessed immortality, no shadow of matter for tears, discontentments, griefs, and uncomfortable passions, to work upon, but all joy, tranquillity, and peace, even for ever and ever, doth dwell."

Whether we peruse the Old Testament or the New, whether we look at the ancient economy or at the dispensation under which we are now living, we shall perceive that these celestial spirits have had a very intimate association with the spiritual and eternal welfare of man, and have been appointed by their Creator to occupy their powers and to engage their thoughts, and to some extent, it may be, the habitude of their lives, in connection with those who shall one day be associated with them in glory. The apostle Paul asks, (and the question is equivalent to the most positive assertion,) "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" What a beautiful thought! The whole company of

angelic beings are ministering spirits, ministering in connection with men, ministering in connection with the world, ministering in connection with beings that are destined to be associated with them in the bliss, and the purity, and the glory, of heaven! On this subject Mr. Taylor remarks: "We know that God needs no attendants to perform his commands, being omnipresent; but being himself likened to a great king, his angels are compared to courtiers and ministers, subordinate to him, and employed in his service. It cannot be said, God does not need angels, therefore angels do not exist; for God does not need man, yet man exists. This principle is evidently the foundation of the apologue which prefaces the poetical part of the Book of Job: 'There was a day, when the sons of God came to present themselves (as it were, at court) before the Lord.' Isaiah's vision is to the same purpose, and our Lord continues the same idea, especially when speaking of his glorious return: 'When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.' In reference to

the services rendered by angels to mankind, we may safely adopt the idea of their being servants of this great King, sent from before his throne to this lower world, to execute his commissions; so far, at least, Scripture warrants us."

The doctrine of spiritual agency, including, as it does, the ministry of holy angels, is a truth, all our knowledge of which is derived from the word of God. We know not in what special mode the angelic ministry is conducted, or in what way impressions are communicated to our minds by these celestial guardians. Hence, in all our statements concerning this mysterious subject, it is all-important that we take the Holy Scriptures as our guide, and with humble gratitude receive the revelation of the fact, without attempting to intrude upon those modes and processes of spiritual communication which are unrevealed. The following remarks on the subject of angelic ministry, by Bishop Bull, are characterized by the modesty and humility of a truly great mind in search of truth:—"We may trace the footsteps of a se-

cret Providence over us in many instances. How often may we have observed strong, lasting, and irresistible impulses, upon our minds, to do certain things, we can scarcely for the present tell why or wherefore, the reason and good success of which we afterward plainly see! So, on the contrary, there are ofttimes sudden and unexpected accidents, as we call them, cast in our way, to divert us from certain enterprises, which we are just ready to engage in, the ill consequences whereof we do afterward, but not till then, apprehend. How strange, many times, are our present thoughts and suggestions in sudden and surprising dangers! We then, upon the spot, resolve and determine as well as if we had a long time deliberated, and taken the best advice; and we afterward wonder how such thoughts came into our minds.

"Hither also we may refer that lucky conspiracy of circumstances which we sometimes experience in our affairs and business, otherwise of great difficulty, when the person whose counsel or assistance we most need strangely concur, and all things fall out ac-

cording to our desire, but beyond our expectation.

"What strange ominous forebodings and fears do many times on a sudden seize upon men, of approaching evils, whereof at present there is no visible appearance! And have we not had some unquestionable instances of men not inclined to melancholy, strongly and unalterably persuaded of the near approach of their death, so as to be able punctually to tell the very day of it, when they have been in good health, and neither themselves nor their friends could discern any present natural cause for such a persuasion? And yet the event has proved that they were not mistaken.

"And although I am no doter on dreams, yet I verily believe that some dreams are monitory, above the power of fancy, and impressed on us by some superior influence. For of such dreams we have plain and undeniable instances in history, both sacred and profane, and in our own age and observation. Nor shall I so value the laughter of skeptics and the scoffs of the Epicureans, as to be ashamed to confess that I myself have had

some convincing experiments of such impressions. Now it is no enthusiasm, but the best account that can be given of them, to ascribe these things to the ministry of those invisible instruments of God's providence that guide and govern our affairs and concerns—the angels of God.

"It is most certain that the holy angels are appointed by divine Providence as the guardians of good men in all their ways, and throughout the whole course of their lives. For of this the Holy Scriptures, to which we have all the reason in the world to give credit, often and most expressly speak; and the wiser heathens themselves have acknowledged as much."

The Scriptures represent angelic beings as exercising a general agency in the dispensations of divine Providence, and in the execution of the great purposes of God in relation to the church and the world. The destruction of the army of Sennacherib, the pestilential visitation which swept off seventy thousand of the Jewish people, are instances of the ministry of angels in carrying out the

judicial dispensations of Providence. In the revelations made to the exile of Patmos, an angel is represented as holding the winds of heaven; another as sounding the trumpet; another as opening the seals; and another as pouring out the vials; all indicating the agency of celestial spirits in the mysterious developments of Providence, whether in judgment or mercy.

The subject of special angelic ministration is interwoven throughout the entire texture of the word of God. In the lives of Abraham and Lot, and of David, Elijah, Elisha, and other prophets, we find them appearing in the scene, sometimes on errands of corrective judgment, more frequently on errands of mercy, and sometimes as ministers of the Holy Spirit, in predicting future events. In all these manifestations there was an evidence and a pledge that the world was not forsaken of God; and as they descended ever and anon from their celestial abodes, and conversed with men, they became the early heralds of that system of revelation which found its great accomplishment in the atoning sacri-

fice and the cross of Calvary. With this great consummation every movement had some connection. And, although they occasionally appeared after Jesus was glorified, yet their visible manifestation became continually more rare, until, at length, it wholly ceased. Although no longer visible, we are taught that their ministry is still in exercise, and shall be continued until the whole church has been gathered home, and angels and saints are for ever united in the paradise of God.

The Scriptural history of the patriarchs and prophets furnishes numerous and most consolatory instances of special angelic ministry. Abraham, "the father of the faithful," seems to have been peculiarly favored with the visits of these celestial spirits. When called to the performance of a strange and fearful duty, the sacrificial offering of his son Isaac, an angel appears to arrest the uplifted knife, and to announce that blessing which imbodied the divine acknowledgment of Abraham's faith, and the glorious promise that in his seed should "all the nations of the earth be blessed."

When the cities of the plain had filled up the cup of their iniquity, and the desperate licentiousness into which they had fallen had determined God in his wrath to cut off their inhabitants, angelic spirits hastened to rescue the righteous Lot from the overwhelming ruin: "And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city." While Lot, under celestial guidance, hastened away from the devoted plain, the terrible judgment descended; the rich masses of Sodom and Gomorrah were swept away in torrents of flame, and the beautiful landscape, which sparkled with the bright rays of that morning sun, before the day closed presented nothing but a smoldering and smoking furnace of death.

When Jacob left his father's house, a child of Providence and a wanderer, fleeing from the face of the incensed Esau, he saw in vision a mysterious and graduated line, drawn between heaven and earth, and the angels of God traversing the whole space: "And

he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending upon it."

"He spread his cloak, and slumber'd; darkness fell
Upon the twilight hills: a sudden sound
Of silver trumpets o'er him seem'd to swell;
Clouds, heavy with the tempest, gather'd round:
Yet was the whirlwind in its caverns bound;
Still deeper roll'd the darkness from on high,
Gigantic volume upon volume wound;
Above, a pillar shooting to the sky,
Below, a mighty sea, that spread incessantly.

"Voices are heard; a choir of golden strings
Low winds, whose breath is loaded with the rose
Then chariot-wheels, the nearer rush of wings;
Pale light'ning round the dark pavilion glows:
It thunders; the resplendent gates unclose;
Far as the eye can glance, on height o'er height,
Rise fiery waving wings and star-crown'd brows,
Millions on millions, brighter and more bright,
Till all is lost in one supreme, unmingled light.

"But two beside the sleeping pilgrim stand,
Like cherub kings, with lifted, mighty plume,
Fix'd, sunbright eyes, and looks of high command:
They tell the patriarch of his glorious doom;
Father of countless myriads that shall come,
Sweeping the land, like billows of the sea,
Bright as the stars of heaven from twilight's gloom,
Till He is given whom angels long to see,
And Israel's splendid line is crown'd with Deity."

Years after this remarkable vision, at a sorrowful period of his life, a portion of the same celestial host met him at Mahanaim, appearing, perhaps, as heralds of the "angel of the Lord," with whom he wrestled at Peniel, and with whose blessing he departed to meet the indignant and dreaded Esau. Who can tell what powerful and mysterious influence was exercised by these angelic spirits on this occasion? or how much of the deeply affecting and unexpected character of the meeting of the estranged brothers was the result of celestial mediation? "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept." Often, while walking in the steps of Abraham's faith, solitary and perplexed, or called to endure the most agonizing bereavements, must Jacob have felt the consoling conviction that he was guarded and attended by unseen friends. And hence, when stricken in years, the light of his eyes quenched by age, and shortly about to rest with his fathers, he implores for the children of Joseph the continuance of the same angelic blessing

which had cheered and guarded his own existence.

When the prophet Elijah was threatened with death by the impious Jezebel, he fled alone into the wilderness, and weary and faint with his painful journey, threw himself beneath the shade of a solitary tree: so utterly hopeless and discouraging appeared his condition that we are told "he requested for himself that he might die." Overwhelmed with fatigue and sorrow, he slept: "And as he lay and slept under a juniper-tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head; and he did eat and drink, and laid him down again." Refreshed by this miraculous and seasonable supply of food, and comforted by the assurance that, even in the solitudes of the wilderness, angels watched and guarded his steps, "he arose, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God."

When Elijah, accompanied by Elisha, had

passed over Jordan, which had been miraculously divided before them, and Elisha had preferred his earnest request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, "it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." It is true, that there is no specific mention here made of angelic spirits; but we may be permitted to believe that, although invisible, they were present, and surrounded the prophet, as he swept upward to the skies in the chariot of heaven.

The history of the prophet Elisha furnishes another remarkable instance of angelic ministration. When sojourning in Dothan, the Syrian king, who was waging war against Israel, sent "a great host," with chariots and horses, for the purpose of apprehending the prophet of God: "And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, a host compassed the city both with chariots and horses. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how

shall we do?" Escape seemed to be impossible, as every avenue of deliverance was closed. But what calm confidence and holy trust in divine guardianship breathes in the words of the prophet: "And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." When, in answer to the prophet's prayer, the power of spiritual vision was communicated to the young man, what a scene presented itself! Apparent danger was changed to absolute security; the surrounding force of Syrian adversaries was as nothing compared to the armies of the skies; and the whole mountain, from base to battlement, blazed with the glory of God.

When Daniel, strong in his confidence in the protecting care of God, dared to disregard the royal statute and its fearful penalty, "and kneeled upon his knees three times a day,

and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime," special angelic ministry was exercised in curbing the ferocity of the lions, and delivering the devoted servant of God from an apparently inevitable death. "My God," exclaimed Daniel, "hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me."

Such are some of the instances of special angelic guardianship recorded in the Old Testament; examples which, while they display the constant and watchful care of God over his saints, also demonstrate the delightful and important truth which applies to every child of God: "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee."

GUARDIAN ANGELS.

Among the Jews, and to some extent in the church of Christ, the doctrine has prevailed, that a particular angelic being was assigned to each saint as his special and constant guardian. On this subject Calmet makes the following remarks: "Guardian angels appear to be alluded to in the Old Tes-

tament. Jacob speaks of the angel who had delivered him out of all danger. The Psalmist, in several places, mentions angels as protectors of the righteous; and this was the common opinion of the Jews in our Saviour's time. When Peter, having been released, came from prison to the house where the disciples were assembled, and knocked at the door, those within thought it was his guardian angel, and not himself. Our Saviour enjoins us not to despise 'little ones,' (that is, his followers,) because *their* angels continually behold the face of our heavenly Father. Both Jews and heathen believed that particular angels were commissioned to attend individuals, and had the care of their conduct and protection. Hesiod, one of the most ancient Greek authors, says, that there are good angels on earth; whom he thus describes:—

'Aerial spirits, by great Jove design'd
To be on earth the guardians of mankind;
Invisible to mortal eyes they go,
And mark our actions, good or bad, below;
The immortal spies with watchful care preside,
And thrice ten thousand round their charges glide.
They can reward with glory or with gold;
Such power divine permission bids them hold.'

Plato says, that every person has two *demons*, or genii, one prompting him to evil, the other to good."

However delightful the idea may appear, that to each of the children of God there is assigned a particular angelic guardian, it appears to have no foundation in the Holy Scriptures. That angelic spirits are deeply interested in the welfare of the saints is a fact of very clear and distinct revelation, and the whole sacred history is its illustration. It is written, "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee." "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." The last text quoted is very rich in meaning; for the verb *παρεμβαλλω* occurring in the Septuagint, being used by Greek writers in general to express the disposition or arrangement of an army, it is evident that not only the angel, but his accompanying host, is near to the dwelling of the righteous; beheld only by their Maker and those who are with them, it is true, but invested with a merciful power to ward off the spiritual foe, to retard the child of God

in his path until the overhanging ruin has fallen, or to hasten him along as they did Lot out of Sodom, that he may pass before it falls. Devoutly did the revered Wesley believe that this *encamping round* was no mere figure of speech; for often, before he retired to rest, would he utter or sing those affecting and beautiful words on this subject, which are put into our lips by Bishop Kenn:—

> "Let thy bless'd angels, while I sleep,
> Around my bed their vigils keep."

All those holy men of old who adhered to the pure faith of the patriarchs and prophets maintained this doctrine in all its spiritual and consistent dignity; but it became perverted and distorted in the hands of the rabbins and Jewish mystics; and when, through them and by other means, it was transmitted to heathen philosophers, the obscuration and perversion became complete.

The *δαιμονια* of the Platonists, the genii of the Romans, the incarnations of the Hindoos, and the æons of the Gnostics, give birth to some sublime dreams, and they are but dreams, sometimes looking like the truth, and

arrayed in fair and beautiful colors. The assertion of Plato, as quoted by Calmet, is the legitimate result of his philosophy, inconsistent as we know it to have been with the simple and sublime revelation of divine truth. The language of Hesiod by no means necessarily involves the doctrine of special angelic guardianship, and, if it did, the *Christian* would surely demand more competent authority than the assertion of the Greek poet. The only Scriptural authority which is advanced by Calmet, or, so far as we are acquainted with the evidences adduced, by the advocates of a special angelic guardianship, is our Lord's language in Matthew xviii, 10: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

On this passage, Rev. R. Watson, in his Exposition of the New Testament, makes the following very interesting remarks:—"Religious enmity and bigotry always produce a contempt of the faithful disciples of Christ, and that in proportion to their zeal and piety.

Here, however, to *despise* seems to signify to undervalue and think lightly of them, in ignorance, or in forgetfulness of the high relation in which they stand to God and to the heavenly world: 'For I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.' In other words, these are the persons whom God so regards, that he will finally place them in his immediate presence, and confer upon them eternal felicity and glory. That this is the sense of the passage, may be established by a few observations.

"1. Those who think that our Lord accommodates his language here to the Jewish notion, that every individual has a guardian angel, and merely means by it, that the disciples were the objects of the special care of Providence, ought to show that it was his practice to make use of language taken from Jewish superstitions to express the truths he was teaching. Of this we have no other instance; and there is no ground, therefore, for supposing that in this place he adopts so circuitous a mode of speech, and one

which, if the Jewish notion of guardian angels were not true, could only have misled his hearers.

"2. If the doctrine of guardian angels were in fact found in Holy Scripture, which, in the sense of one having the charge of each individual, may be confidently denied, yet the text cannot refer to that doctrine; because the angels here mentioned are said to be *in heaven*, beholding the face of their Father, and that *always*. How then does this express the discharge of their office as guardians, which supposes them to be upon earth?

"3. The passage cannot refer to the angels in general. It is indeed an express and important doctrine of Scripture, that there is a general ministry of angels exerted in behalf of the 'heirs of salvation,' though not by assigning each believer to the care of a particular angel, which is a rabbinical figment. But that this general ministry of celestial spirits to the saints cannot be meant here, will follow from the reason just given, that the angels here spoken of are represented as

in heaven, beholding the face of God, and not as ministering upon earth.

"4. If it be said, that to behold the face of God imports not their being always in his presence, (which, however, is contrary to the letter of the text,) but their being entitled to approach it, and that thus it marks the exalted dignity of those angels that minister to the disciples; it may be replied, that this privilege of beholding God belongs to all the angels, or only to a part of them. If those who think the text speaks of angels, confine it to a part of them, to the exclusion of the rest, then they assume what is contrary to other scriptures, which represent them all as standing before God, beholding his glory, and waiting his commands: 'I saw the Lord,' says the prophet, 'sitting upon his throne, and *all the host of heaven* standing by him on his right hand, and on his left.' But if this same privilege of beholding the face of God be common to all the angels, it cannot be a mark of the dignity of those who are supposed to be here spoken of as ministering to the disciples.

"5. Others have taken the words more vaguely and generally, as simply importing that though the angels of God are in so exalted a state as to behold the face of God, and to enjoy access to his immediate presence, yet they disdain not to care for the persons and interests of the humblest believers. This is a consolatory and interesting truth: but whoever attentively considers the words will see, that if this were their meaning, the mode of expression is exceedingly obscure, and far removed from that clearness and simplicity which characterize our Lord's teaching, except when he evidently designed, for some important purpose, to involve the truth for a time in parable, which cannot here be urged. His words are, '*For I say unto you, that in heaven their angels*,' the angels of the disciples, '*do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven;*' which convey certainly no intimation of the ministration of angels at all.

"6. The term *angels* must therefore be taken, not for that order of celestial beings usually designated by it: but for the *dis-*

embodied spirits of the disciples themselves; and that this was a common mode of expression among the Jews of that age is strongly corroborated from Acts xii, 15. Here it is related that Peter, being miraculously delivered out of prison, came knocking at the door of the house of Mary, the mother of Mark; that the damsel Rhoda knew his voice, but opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in to announce that Peter was at the gate; and that she strongly affirming it, in opposition to the incredulity of the disciples who were assembled for prayer in the house, they at length replied, believing certainly that he was yet in prison, 'It is his angel.' Now that they could mean anything by the term 'angel,' except Peter's *spirit*, is incredible; for his voice, and his own affirmation to the damsel, (for what should he say to her but that he was Peter, and sought admittance?) assured her that Peter was at the gate; and the disciples, at length yielding to her testimony, and doubting not but that his body was fast held in prison, being as yet ignorant of

his miraculous deliverance, could only conclude that it was his *spirit*. As for the notion of some of the rabbins that guardian angels sometimes assumed the appearance of the person they had in charge, it cannot be proved to have been received generally, even among the rabbins themselves, nor to be as ancient as the time of Peter: or even, if so, as such dreams were all drawn from the oriental philosophy with which many of them were infected, they were confined to speculative men, and did not influence the popular belief. We have here then an easy interpretation of the text, and one which we shall see perfectly harmonizes with what follows. The argument against *despising* Christ's disciples is placed upon this ground, that they are so the objects of God's regard, that he will raise them into his immediate presence, and crown them with immortal life; and this argument our Lord expresses in this striking manner: 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you that in heaven,' that is, in a future state, 'their an-

gels,' their spirits, 'do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven;' they are admitted even to the beatific vision of God."

On this question of tutelary or guardian angels, Bishop Horsley remarks: "That the holy angels are often employed by God in his government of this sublunary world, is indeed to be clearly proved by holy writ. That they have power over the matter of the universe, analogous to the powers over it which men possess, greater in extent, but still limited, is a thing which might reasonably be supposed, if it were not declared. But it seems to be confirmed by many passages of holy writ, from which it seems also evident that they are occasionally, for certain specific purposes, commissioned to exercise those powers to a certain extent. That the evil angels possessed before their fall the like powers, which they are still occasionally permitted to exercise for the punishment of wicked nations, seems also evident. That they have a power over the human sensory, which they are occasionally permitted to exercise,

and by means of which they may inflict diseases, suggest evil thoughts, and be the instruments of temptation, must also be admitted. But all this amounts not to anything of a discretional authority placed in the hands of tutelar angels, or to an authority to advise the Lord God with respect to the measures of his government. Confidently I deny that a single text is to be found in holy writ, which, rightly understood, gives the least countenance to the abominable doctrine of such a participation of the holy angels in God's government of the world. In what manner then, it may be asked, are the holy angels made at all subservient to the purposes of God's government? This question is answered by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, in the last verse of the first chapter; and this is the only passage in the whole Bible in which we have anything explicit upon the office and employment of angels: 'Are they not all,' saith he, 'ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?' They are all, however high in rank and order, nothing more than 'minis-

tering spirits,' or, literally, 'serving spirits;' not invested with authority of their own, but 'sent forth,' occasionally sent forth, to do such service as may be required of them, 'for them that shall be heirs of salvation.'"

CHAPTER IV.

MINISTRY OF ANGELS IN CONNECTION WITH THE WORK OF CHRIST, AND THE PRACTICAL RESULTS OF REDEMPTION.

It was at the opening of the New Testament dispensation, and in connection with the work of the Redeemer, that angelic interest assumed its deepest and most intense expression. Twice had Gabriel appeared, immediately preceding the birth of Jesus, to Zacharias, to announce the birth of John, the herald of the Messiah: and again to Mary, to bear the wondrous tidings of the approach of the incarnate God, the long-expected Redeemer. The heavenly hosts appeared on high on the morning of the Redeemer's birth, and sung the blissful event: "And suddenly

there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." A circumstance this which shows that the church above and the church below have a similar medium of praise; the adoring emotions of every individual in both are blended in one choral effort, although the sound of human voices is far beneath the music of the glorified. The language of their song sufficiently indicates what a view they took of the kingdom of grace, now about to be established; how true it was that heaven was reconciled to earth, and yet consistently with "glory to God in the highest." It was a doxology which would, no doubt, be renewed at the conversion subsequently of every sinner. It was a real and vocal ode, and not merely a poetic conception, clothed by the adoring shepherds with the idea of song; for very often since, as the physical ear of the dying Christian has become dull, his spiritual ear, rendered more acute, has caught the echo of these distant symphonies.

"O! lovely voices of the sky,
Which hymn'd the Saviour's birth,
Are ye not singing still on high,
Ye that sung 'Peace on earth?'
To us yet speak the strains,
Wherewith, in time gone by,
Ye bless'd the Syrian swains,
O! voices of the sky."

The angels, too, though unaccustomed to sorrow, lingered around our Saviour's path in all his sufferings. In the wilderness, when he was "tempted of the devil," they were there through all the arduous contest; and when the evil spirit, foiled and baffled, had left the Redeemer, "angels came and ministered unto him." When he endured the agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and had well-nigh fainted beneath the overwhelming burden of human guilt, and the dark shadows of the hour of awful dissolution were closing around his spirit, there appeared an angel strengthening him, and sustaining his trembling frame while he drank the Father's cup, and thus withheld the departing life. When the terrible scenes of Calvary approached; when horror convulsed the shivering form of

Jesus; when his cries, unheeded in heaven, were mocked in hell; and his groans were answered by the moaning of the earthquake and the rending of the sepulchres: angelic spirits thronged around him until they caught the glance of the Eternal which bid them retire, when they fled in speechless consternation from his side, and left him there alone. And, when priest and soldier mocked the dying agonies of the Son of God, millions of angels shook the heavens with the thunder of their plumage, as their wings flashed forth to sweep to the rescue of their Lord and Master. When he rose from the tomb, "the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door;" and two of them sat, one at the head and another at the foot, where the body of Jesus had lain. They announced to the faithful sisterhood the fact of his resurrection, as though exulting in their Lord's victory; they flung shame and mockery into the strength and courage of the armed guards, and they appeared to do honor to their Master, who

had spoiled principalities and powers, and was triumphing over them, making a show of them openly.

When He left the world, and ascended to the glories of heaven, these celestial spirits attended him. Angels were present when Jesus gathered his disciples together at Olivet, took his last leave of his church below, threw his parting glance on the assembled apostles, pronounced his benediction of love, and then, in the cloudy chariot of the skies, swept upward to his heavenly home. We seem almost to hear the delightful song of praise chanted by angelic spirits as the triumphant Redeemer ascended to his glory—as, laden with the destinies of countless myriads, he returns to his kingdom, from a campaign of toil, of suffering, of death, and of glorious victory: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in;" while the angels that are within respond, "Who is the King of glory?" and those who were escorting him to heaven replied, "The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle,

the Lord of hosts; he is the King of glory." "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." As he ascended, an angel lingered behind, by divine appointment, and, pointing upward, said to the wondering disciples, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Precious promise! The hope of a suffering church in every age! Fully and gloriously shall "this same Jesus" vindicate the prediction of this angelic prophet of the ascension.

In heaven angelic spirits perpetually adore the Redeemer. John says, "I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, singing with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

In the practical progress and in the ultimate results of redemption angels are deeply interested. They are represented by the apostle Peter as "desiring to look" into the mysteries of redeeming grace; and this, we may suppose, not as unconcerned spectators, but because they derive from the redeeming system a personal and practical benefit. "The angelic powers," says Mr. Watson, "have an intellectual interest in the administration of the grace of God to men, through the atonement and sacrifice of the Saviour. Peter is supposed to refer to the bending attitude of the cherubim when he says, 'Which things the angels desire to look into.' What things? The things represented by the union of the broken tables of the law, with the covering of the mercy-seat; the approach of guilty man to God—to God sitting on his throne of grace, where he obtains mercy, and finds grace to help in time of need. These are the things the angels desired to look into. They are great in intellect, no doubt, as they excel in strength, and over the vast fields of science they travel, no doubt, with ease, where man

proceeds with so much difficulty. To them the spaces of all nature are open; they can wing their way from world to world, and they can apply their attention to those things which most interest mortals, the various changing scenes of this present earth, for instance. But wherever they fly, there is one place where they are represented as resting; whatever flights they take, here they rest, and they look into the things of which we have spoken, the dispensation of the grace of God to the vile and unworthy, through the atonement of the Saviour."

To the fact of the intellectual interest felt by angelic spirits in the work of redemption St. Paul seems to allude in Eph. iii, 10: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." On this passage Dr. Macknight observes: "Though the angels, who" desire to look into "the types and figures of the law, may have had a general idea of the divine purposes respecting mankind from the ancient revelations, yet the actual execution

of God's purposes, in the coming of his Son, in his death and resurrection, and in the constitution of the Christian church, by the union of the Jews and Gentiles therein through faith, must, as Paul here affirms, when explained in the preaching of the apostles, have increased the knowledge of the heavenly powers, by affording them new proofs of the wisdom of God, which is infinitely various, and which hath illustriously displayed itself in bringing these great events to pass."

In nothing are the combined attributes of the Infinite Mind so illustriously developed as in the origin, execution, application, and wonderful results, of the system of redeeming grace: and no intellect, angelic or human, can devote itself to this great study, without becoming personally conscious that Christ is not only the "power of God," but "the wisdom of God;" and that the language of the Psalmist may become the expression of present experience: "The entrance of thy words, O God, giveth understanding to the simple." The moral constitution of man is of such a nature, as that it is uniformly, and to a great

extent influenced by the nature of the intellectual studies in which it is engaged, and the subjects with which it is conversant. Many examples of this might easily be adduced. Now it is important for us to observe that all the objects of Christian knowledge which are placed before the people of God, for their study and habitual contemplation, are identified in the divine arrangements with the purity and the advancing holiness of the soul. There is a very beautiful prayer presented by St. Paul on behalf of the Colossian church, in which this identification between the augmentation of knowledge and progressive holiness is recorded; and it is worthy of notice that the terms employed are interchanged, as though to mark more strongly this very identification. Col. i, 9–12: "For this cause we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the know-

ledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

If there be such a connection between knowledge and holiness in reference to the human spirit, are we not authorized to believe that such may also be the case with angelic minds? If, then, angels derive a positive moral benefit from the system of human redemption, we have another and an important reason for the interest exhibited by celestial spirits. On this point Mr. Watson remarks: "Perhaps we may go further, and say that we have evidence from Scripture that angelic beings have *a moral benefit* resulting from the plan of redemption. That they need no redemption we know; they have not fallen: it is not, therefore, in the way of direct redemption that that moral benefit springs. But I think it is easy to see that, if to any being already pure, brighter views of God,

more important degrees of moral knowledge be communicated, that, to every pure being, such as they are, this communication of knowledge must always be the instrument of increasing the holiness and the felicity of the being placed in such circumstances. And I think it is as easy to show, that there must necessarily be great subjects with which the angels must become better acquainted; far better than they could ever have been, but for the great history and occurrences of our redemption. Think you that angels ever acquired such views of the sinfulness of sin as when they viewed the scenes of the passion, and when they saw that sin could not be purged away but by the sacrifice of the Son of God? It is very true they were acquainted with God's goodness, his exuberant goodness, to his creatures; but could they ever know him as so emphatically the God of love, as when they saw the great Shepherd himself following the lost sheep into the wilderness in order to seek and to save them—as when they saw love seeking, love teaching, love

traveling, love suffering, love agonizing, love dying, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself?

"It is very true that these celestial beings must have been very deeply impressed with a sense of the power of God when they saw the wonders of creation; when *nothing* heard the voice of God, and was substantiated into this goodly world; and when *everything* heard his voice, and took its proper place, and earth presented itself to view in all its loveliness and perfection, and made even its Maker to say it was very good. But there was nothing here to rest upon; all was passive in his hands. Angels have seen in the incidents of the new creation much more marvelous proofs of the divine power to plant principles in this bad and alien heart of man, which shall develop themselves by rendering a creature so fallen capable of virtues so high, so glorious. The knowledge which angels have thus obtained must be knowledge which shall contribute to all eternity to the happiness of their being."

Angelic spirits, we are assured by the Saviour, manifest a deep and affecting interest

in the practical results of redemption: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Angels were witnesses of the mighty conflict in which the powers of darkness were overthrown. They gazed upon the unspeakable agonies of the Son of God, and hence, they rejoice when they see the tear which tells of "a broken and contrite heart."

When there is an accession made to the Redeemer's kingdom, an enlargement obtained to his dominions; when Jesus receives the purchase of his blood, and sees "of the travail of his soul;" there is joy in heaven among the angels of God. Bright seraphim in robes of light lift up their angel trumpets; heaven is all gladness and jubilee; its unclouded sky reflects angelic happiness, and its everlasting hills echo with the song of thanksgiving; the tree of life hangs with a more luxurious fruit; the marriage supper of the Lamb assumes a more cheerful festivity; the inhabitants of the "many mansions" anticipate with new delight a future companion; and the "many crowns" upon the Sa

viour's head sparkle with an augmented brilliancy :—

> "There is joy in heaven!
> There is joy in heaven!
> When the sheep that went astray
> Turns again to virtue's way;
> When the soul, by grace subdued,
> Sobs its prayer of gratitude,
> Then is there joy in heaven."

In one of our Lord's discourses we have another and most interesting intimation of angelic ministry. The account is that of the rich man and Lazarus; and the angels are described as bearing away the spirit of the latter to Abraham's bosom, which, in the language of a Jew, was paradise, the abode of sanctified and glorified spirits. The Saviour's relation might not be taken from a known or recorded fact, and yet must be a vivid representation of the truth; as our Lord never made use of a Jewish fable to enunciate his doctrines, and never countenanced a national superstition. Spiritual, therefore, as are the souls of those who are freed from the body, or clothed in a medium which cannot be traced by mortal sense, the holy angels at-

tend the last moments of the servants of God, and, when the brief struggle is over, bear them triumphantly to their rest above. Not that the spirit would not find its home without this agency, for under any circumstances the sanctified spirit would instinctively ascend to God; but by this arrangement the angels themselves are blessed. They rejoiced at the sinner's repentance; they hailed with holy triumph his conversion; they have waited upon and ministered unto him all through his pilgrimage; and it is with rapture and with shouts of triumph that they bear his glorified spirit to the paradise of God.

It is a well-known psychological fact, that in many instances, as the powers of physical perception become obtuse, intellectual and spiritual perception becomes exceedingly acute. As the bodily eye becomes dim, the spiritual eye grows bright and clear; as the bodily ear becomes insensible to sound, the spiritual ear develops its power. With this fact before us, we may be permitted to suggest, whether there may not be more than

imagination in the circumstances connected with the departure of many of the people of God. How many of the dying saints, as they entered the waters of Jordan, have expressed their confident assurance that angelic spirits were present, and have called the attention of weeping friends to strains of melody audible only to the dying ear! In the beautiful language of Bunyan, "All the trumpets sounded for them from the other side;" angels floated round the bed of death; the bells of paradise were ringing; and, borne by angel pinions, the Christian conqueror mounted to his home above:—

"When from flesh the spirit freed,
Hastens homeward to return,
Mortals cry, 'A man is dead!'
Angels sing, 'A child is born!'
Born into the world above,
They our happy brother greet;
Bear him to the throne of love,
Place him at the Saviour's feet."

In the solemn scenes connected with the second advent of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment, the sacred record informs us that angelic spirits shall bear a prominent and important part. How

long the final triumph of the Saviour may be deferred, how long a period may elapse before the world shall reach the close of its long and varied history, is one of those secrets which God has reserved to himself: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man; no, not the Son, but the Father only." But that angels shall share in the solemnities of the season of doom and decision has been clearly and explicitly revealed. In Matt. xxv, 31, 32, our Lord expressly says, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations." And in Matt. xxiv, 30, 31, "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The same fact is also distinctly taught by St. Paul, in 1 Thess. i, 7, 8: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking

vengeance on them that know not God" How awfully impressive are these divine declarations, and yet how full of comfort to the true Christian! The holy angels, who have manifested an interest so deep through all the pilgrimage of the saints of God, are permitted to take an active and important share in their resurrection and final glorification. The following remarks by Dr. Burder may be regarded as an exponent of the views of sober divines on this subject. In his sermon on the second advent of Christ, he observes: "At midnight, perhaps, the cry will be heard, 'Behold, he cometh.' A splendor, such as Paul beheld on his way to Damascus, such as the apostle John beheld on Patmos, yes, an appearance far more intense, may suddenly beam forth from the face of the Judge, and light up the heavens with a blaze of glory. *Now* will be the manifestation of the Son of God; he will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, appearing in all the glory of his Father, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe. How unlike the babe of Bethlehem,

how unlike the carpenter of Nazareth, how unlike the wearied traveler at Jacob's well, how unlike the prostrate suppliant at Gethsemane, how unlike the buffeted, scourged, and crucified man of Calvary is He that cometh with all his holy angels at the last great day! The multitude of angels, with a shout loud as from numbers without number, pause only in their acclamations that the deep silence which succeeds may be broken by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. That archangel, the herald of the highest rank in the creation, shall first proclaim the second advent of Messiah, and then that appalling and unearthly trumpet, once heard on Sinai, shall summon from their dust the sleepers of the grave."

Our Lord, in explaining the import of the parable of the tares to his disciples, expressly says, "The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels." Matt. xiii, 39. Thus teaching not only that angelic agency shall be exercised in connection with the scenes of the final judgment, but pointing out the special part of its solemn transactions

committed to their charge. On the passage last quoted Mr. Watson remarks, "The angels," says our Lord, "are the reapers, not men having infirmities, pride, passion, prejudice, selfishness, but perfectly pure and holy spirits, and yet these act under the direction of the Son of man, who appears in his glory, is *present* at the final separation, which, being thus performed under his own eye, secures even angels from mistake."

"Suddenly
In heaven appear'd a host of angels strong,
With chariots and with steeds of burning fire;
Cherub and seraph, thrones, dominions, powers,
Bright in celestial armor, dazzling rode.
And leading in the front, illustrious shone
Michael and Gabriel, servants long approved
In high commission, girt that day with power,
Which naught created, man or devil, might
Resist. Nor waited, gazing long; but quick
Descending, silently and without song,
As servants bent to do their Master's work,
To middle air they raised the human race,
Above the path long travel'd by the sun;
And as a shepherd from the sheep divides
The goats; or husbandman, with reaping bands,
In harvest, separates the precious wheat,
Selected from the tares, so did they part
Mankind, the good and bad, to right and left,
To meet no more."

The late Dr. Payson has thus powerfully described the thrilling and awful scenes connected with the appearance of the Saviour, the judgment of the world, and the agency of angelic beings in the final allotments of our race :—

"Pause, then, for a moment, and contemplate with the eye of faith, or if you have no faith, with the eye of imagination, this tremendous scene. Look at that point, far away in the ethereal regions, where the gradually lessening form of our Saviour disappeared from the gaze of his disciples, when he ascended to heaven. In that point see an uncommon, but faint and undefined brightness, just beginning to appear. It has caught the roving eye of yon thoughtless gazer, and excited his curiosity. He points it out to a second and a third. A little circle soon collects, and various are the conjectures which they form respecting it. Similar circles are formed, and similar conjectures made, in a thousand different parts of the world. But conjecture is soon to give place to certainty, awful, appalling, overwhelming certainty. While

they gaze, the appearance, which had excited their curiosity, rapidly approaches, and still more rapidly brightens. Some begin to suspect what it may prove; but no one dares to give utterance to his suspicions. Meanwhile the light of the sun begins to fade before a brightness superior to his own.

"Thousands see their shadows cast in a new direction, and thousands of hitherto careless eyes look up at once, to discover the cause. Full clearly they see it; and new hopes and fears begin to agitate their breasts. The afflicted and persecuted disciples of Christ begin to hope, that the predicted, long expected day of their deliverance has arrived. The wicked, the careless, the unbelieving, begin to fear that the Bible is about to prove no idle tale.

"Now fiery shapes, moving like streams of lightning, begin to appear indistinctly amidst the bright dazzling cloud which comes rushing down, as on the wings of a whirlwind. At length it reaches its destined place. It pauses; then, suddenly unfolding, discloses at once a great white throne, where

sits, starry resplendent, in all the glories of the Godhead, the man Christ Jesus. Every eye sees him, every heart knows him. Too well do the wretched, unprepared inhabitants of earth, now know what to expect; and one universal shriek of anguish and despair rises up to heaven, and is echoed back to earth. But louder, far louder than the universal cry, now sounds the last trumpet; and far above all is heard the voice of the Omnipotent, summoning the dead to arise and come to judgment. New terrors now assail the living; and on every side, nay under their feet, the earth heaves as in convulsions; graves open, and the dead come forth; while, at the same moment, a change, equivalent to that occasioned by death, is effected by almighty power on the bodies of the living. Their mortal bodies put on immortality, and are thus prepared to sustain a weight of glory, or of wretchedness, which flesh and blood could not endure. Meanwhile, legions of angels are seen darting from pole to pole, gathering together the faithful servants of Christ from

the four winds of heaven, and bearing them aloft to meet the Lord in the air, where he causes them to be placed at his own right hand, preparatory to the sentence which is to award to them everlasting life.

Our Lord has taught us that there shall be a final and public acknowledgment of his people before assembled angels. Luke xii, 8, 9: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God." On this interesting development of the concluding feature of angelic agency upon earth Mr. Watson observes: "To all such persons Christ promises a public acknowledgment before the angels of God, referring, no doubt, to his second coming. This acknowledgment will, doubtless, be a solemn act in the presence of the assembled angels, that all orders of intelligent holy beings may know the grounds of the divine procedure at that great day, a circumstance which shall minister more than we can conceive to their instruction, and perhaps future safety; since the wonderful discoveries of good and evil which that day will make,

and the rewards and punishments of infinite variety which will be assigned, will form such a manifestation of God, in his government of creatures, as has never before taken place, and must be remembered with awe and joy to all eternity. But, previous to the final act of acknowledgment before the throne, there will be a distinguishing recognition. The angels of God will be the instruments of gathering together the elect from the four winds of heaven; they rise *first*, so that they are thus acknowledged to be the 'dead in Christ,' them that 'sleep in Jesus,' before the angels on that occasion become their willing and joyful ministers."

When this public acknowledgment shall have taken place, and the whole ransomed church of God has been gathered home, we are authorized to believe that saints and angels shall be united in one glorious company. It is delightful to feel the communion of saints upon earth, but it heightens the idea when we can connect the church below with the church above, and feel that there is a blessed haven of repose,

"Where all the ship's company meet,
Who sail'd with the Saviour beneath."

But the thought and the feeling of union with glorified saints above, those whom we have loved on earth, and whose triumphant victory over death we have witnessed, become still more elevated and delightful when we connect them with the angels of God. There they are one with the saints, all one in Christ, all gathered up in him, their living Head. There angelic guardianship ceases, and the celestial hosts rejoice over their younger brethren, the objects of their care and love.

Serious and elevated should Christians be when they reflect that they shall dwell in eternity with such exalted company. Our heavenly Father has allowed us now and then to catch a glimpse of the higher branches of his family, that we, the lower, might behold their superior holiness, and so avail ourselves of the grace of the gospel as to imitate it. Do the angels rejoice over repenting sinners, and gladly minister for them when they become saints, following them with untiring affection through all the sorrows of life? Here

we have the highest example of charity in action that created beings can furnish. Thus ought ministers and all Christians to follow sinners with holy solicitude until they yield to God, and then to hover around them with affectionate congratulation and pious aid; thus ought they to cherish the "*burning fire of charity*," which Dr. Cudworth so delightfully speaks of; then should we see a far happier world, and stronger would be the bonds of society. Are the angels restless in their activity and praise, and is their song of thanksgiving continual? Then, day and night, as far as human infirmity will allow, should those who have been redeemed by grace glorify its great Author, living to his honor, and not to promote their own; for, wherever a church exists, earth ought to be a faint echo of heaven. Are the angels fixed in their holy and happy estate, and is God the object of their unconstrained choice, their infinite good? and do they receive, as Howe says, those "sweet and secret intimations," those "illapses by which hidden sense is conveyed even in a moment," and by which "God is

to slide into the very spirits of these blessed beings, and prompt them this way or that, as he pleases?" then it is our joy to learn that the Spirit which works in them so successfully, may, through Christ, be obtained by believers, effecting the same rectitude of will, the same devoted and sanctified purpose and service, which consist in choosing God as the "all in all," and then trusting in him for ever while doing his commandments. Do the angels see face to face Him whom we can see enigmatically and by faith? This is the highest point of bliss; and if we could but permanently plunge into that fathomless fount of joy, and see what a spring there is in heaven for love and praise, such a thing as an interval or night would be anomalous and an affliction. O, when we consider that the spark of grace and life eternal which we bear in our bosoms may one day be expanded into a flame, pure, bright, and indefectible, like theirs, we are in part reconciled to the toil of our pilgrimage and to the prison of life: knowing that both will endure but for a time; and that, groan as we may to love God more,

the morning of our awaking to see him will behold us in possession of more than groans could desire or hope anticipate. This is the end to which the grace of Christ and the Spirit's influences are conducting the people of God; it is the goal which enlightens and then terminates their course. Beautiful are the words of Zuinger in his paraphrase of the hundred and twenty-second Psalm, made on his death-bed, and quoted by Bishop Horne, and which is thus translated by Mr. Merrick:

"The festal morn, my God, is come,
That calls me to the hallow'd dome,
Thy presence to adore;
My feet the summons shall attend,
With willing steps thy courts ascend,
And tread the ethereal floor.

"E'en now to my expecting eyes
The heaven-built towers of Salem rise;
E'en now with glad survey
I view her mansions, that contain
The angelic forms, an awful train,
And shine with cloudless day."

According to him, they apply to this subject and speak of this happiness; and when our Lord gazed in spirit on that blessedness

which he fervently desired for his people in this world, he taught them, through the medium of the disciples, to pray that it might be with us on earth as it is with the angels in heaven; thereby showing that in our present earthly condition there is no higher blessing.

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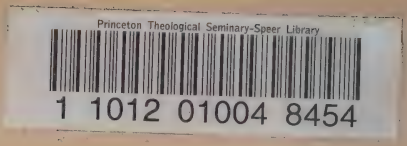
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